

## *Giving Streaked With The Red Blood of Sacrifice*

by Tom Wacaster

An interesting inquiry this past month has caused this student to give some consideration as to our giving, particularly with regard to the motive that lies behind our giving. I was asked, "Is the child of God *commanded* to give, or is it a voluntary act?" More specifically, "How do we harmonize the command to give in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 with other passages that indicate our giving is a voluntary manifestation of our love for God?" Every passage that addresses the giving of the child of God focuses on the attitude as much, if not more, than the action. We are to give "bountifully," "not grudgingly or of necessity," as we "have purposed in our heart," and with joy and cheerfulness "for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:6-7). One of the best examples of giving can be found in the case of the widow who gave her two mites to the Lord in deep appreciation for her love for the Father. Perhaps it would do us good to consider again the story, the act, and the motive as recorded in Luke 21:1-4. Here is how the text reads:

"And he looked up, and saw the rich men that were casting their gifts into the treasury. And he saw a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, This poor widow cast in more than they all: for all these did of their superfluity cast in unto the gifts; but she of her want did cast in all the living that she had" (Luke 21:1-4).

Mark's account tells us that Jesus watched how they gave. He not only saw what they gave, but how they gave. We are not suggesting that our Lord was unaware of what they gave, but that He was more concerned with the motive than the amount. But think for a moment about the amount this widow gave. We can view this from two aspects. The first is the actual amount; the monetary value of what she placed into the vessel. Two mites were about one-ninety-sixth of a denarius, and a denarius if exchanged at a local bank today would bring less than a penny. Now, you may squabble over the precise amount, but be assured, the mite, being the smallest of the Roman coinage, was worth less than one-ninety-sixth of a penny, even in today's market. That, my friend, was a meager amount. But let us look at this from another vantage point, namely the "amount" in comparison to what she possessed. It was all she had; she had no more! It makes no difference how much one may possess, when he gives "all," there is nothing left! If she was a pauper before she gave, she was even more of a pauper after she gave.

Now imagine if you will, our Lord as He observed the action of this woman. Not only was Jesus watching her, but through divine inspiration we are provided enough details that we can watch our Lord through the eye of faith. Our Lord was watching the "rich men that were casting their gifts into the treasury" (verse 1). To be sure, these were magnificent gifts, at least by the calculations of men. But now comes this widow, and as our Lord watched her she cast in all she possessed. Her very life depended upon these two mites, but because of her faith in God she was willing to give these to her God in trusting Abrahamic faith, confident that Jehovah would care for her as He did for the patriarchs of old. Now listen to the words of our Master: "Of a truth I say unto you, This poor widow cast in more than they all: for all these did of their superfluity cast in unto the gifts; but she of her want did cast in all the living that she had" (verses 3b-4). Notice that He did not say that she had cast in more than any one of them, but more than all of them put together. And herein lies the lesson for our consideration.

There are two ways of giving. In the case of the "rich men," they were giving out of their superfluity; out of their abundance. Literally, they were giving out of what was *left over*. They were giving out of what they did not need! Here were large gifts, amounting to a large amount; but nobody missed what was given. Now let us look at the widow. She gave out of her want.

"Want" is equivalent to her *need*, and yet out of that need she had given to the Lord. This entire story reveals two ways of giving: giving out of superfluity, giving what we do not need and will never really miss. The other is giving with the red blood of sacrifice running through the gift! May I be so bold as to suggest that it is not the amount that the Lord is interested in, but the amount in comparison to what He has given us as we are motivated by love to give back to Him in grateful appreciation the gift of our heart and soul.

I cannot now recall the source of this quote, but I filed it away more than five decades ago. "The gold of affluence which is given because it is not needed, God hurls to the bottomless pit; but the copper tinged with blood He lifts and kisses into the gold of eternity." That, my friends, is "giving streaked with the red blood of sacrifice."